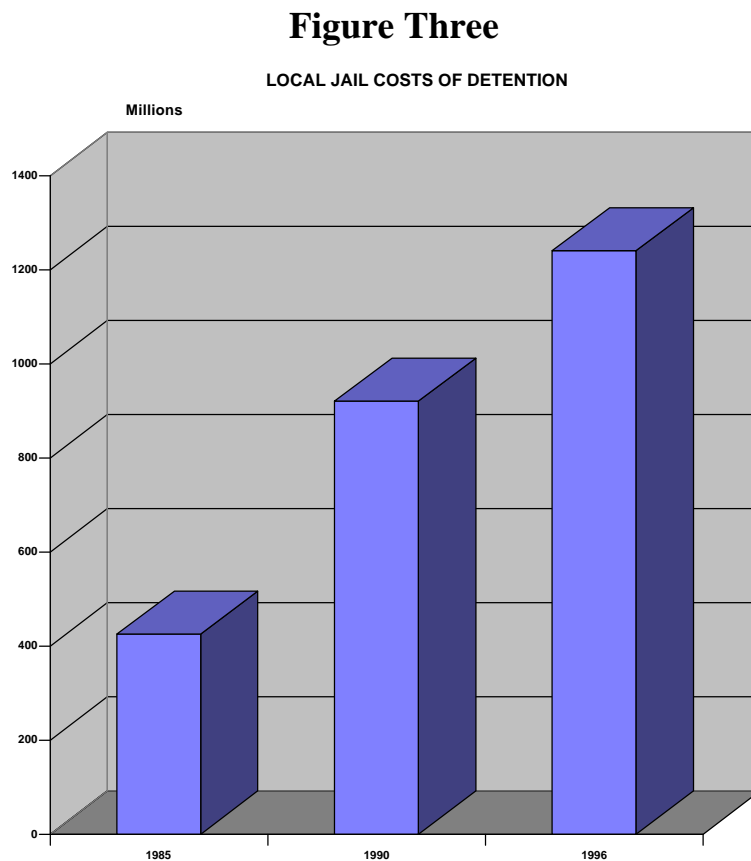


Impact of Fiscal Constraints

In an environment of fiscal limitations, counties have found it increasingly difficult to fund the ongoing staffing and operating costs of detention facilities. Construction represents less than 10 percent of the cost of a jail over an average 30-year life span, while staffing and operating costs account for 90 percent or more of the total cost. Staffing deficiencies due to fiscal pressures affect detention facility operations in some jurisdictions.

Figure Three shows that county jail operational costs (excluding debt service) almost tripled between 1984/85 and 1995/96, increasing from \$446 million in 1984/85 (about 40,000 beds on-line) to \$1.24 billion in 1995/1996 (about 68,000 beds on-line). Per capita operational bed costs increased from \$11,000 to over \$18,000, about 5 percent per year.

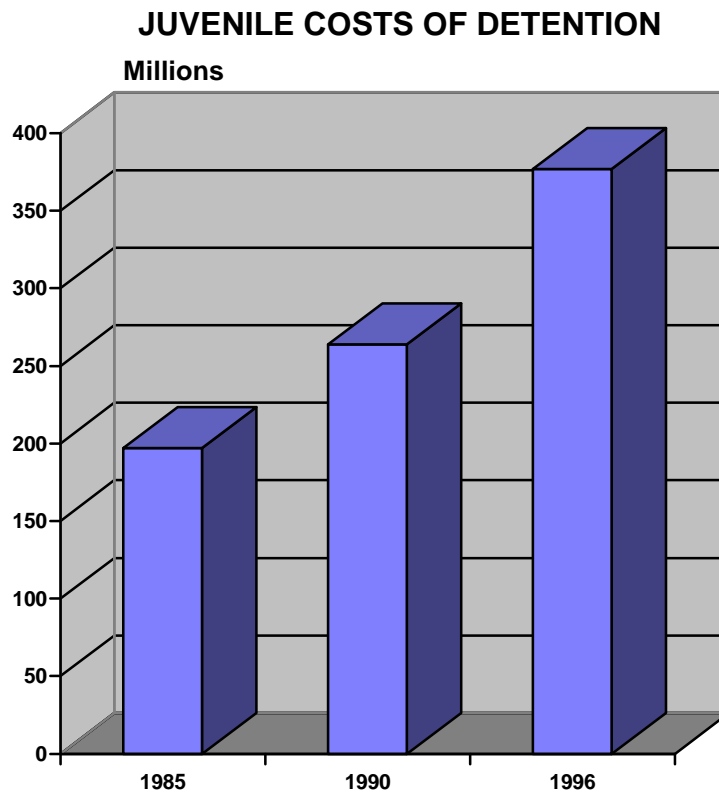


Source: State Controller's Annual Report,
Financial Transactions Concerning Counties of California, 1984/85 through 1995/96

Figure Four shows that operational costs (excluding debt service) for local juvenile facilities increased from \$1.96 million in 1984/85 (about 9,000 beds on-line) to \$3.76 million in 1995/96 (about 10,000 beds on-line). Per capita operational bed costs rose from \$21,000 to over \$37,000, about 5 percent a year.

Operational costs for county juvenile facilities are almost twice that of county jails, due to the significantly higher staffing costs. Minimum standards for juvenile facilities, which involve intensive programming, require one staff to every 10 minors. In contrast, there is no specific staffing ratio required for county jails where incarceration and security are the primary concerns.

Figure Four



Detention facilities are particularly vulnerable to fiscal constraints because proportionately high fixed operational costs (e.g., food, clothing, medical care, court transportation, and minimum staffing for safety and security) limit the ability to make discretionary cutbacks and still operate the facility. There simply are not many ways to cut detention costs without reducing local capacity by closing housing units or entire facilities.

One area where detention facilities have found some flexibility is in facility maintenance. By deferring some needed repairs and foregoing preventative maintenance activities, many adult and juvenile detention systems have been able to defer costs and redirect currently available funds. This temporary solution, however, is leading to premature deterioration of facilities and rapidly escalating deferred repair and maintenance costs (Chapter 3).